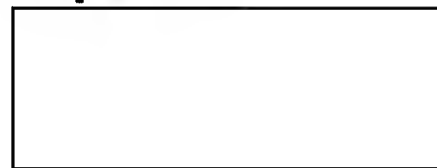


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Communist China: Although the leaders of the Cultural Revolution have just put on a new display of unity, signs of tension are still present.

On 19 March in Peking, Premier Chou En-lai addressed a Congress of Peasants on behalf of Mao Tse-tung and Lin Piao, neither of whom normally attends a rally of this sort. But virtually every other luminary of the Cultural Revolution was there including Madame Mao, Chen Po-ta, and Kang Sheng. This is the first public appearance of the group since 22 February, when they attended a rally marking the establishment of a single Red Guard organization in Peking.

Chou's message was the moderate one he has customarily used throughout the Cultural Revolution. He stressed the need to go forward with farm work and repeated what editorials have been saying for several weeks--that there are to be no "power seizures" in the countryside during the farm season. While Chou noted that "politics must take command," his speech was less strident in tone than that of Chen Po-ta. Chen emphasized the overriding validity of Mao's thought and insisted that its proper application would overcome all obstacles.

Other signs of disagreement continue to appear behind the scenes. Rallies denouncing agricultural specialist Tan Chen-lin have been held almost every day since 11 March, and there are sporadic attacks on other officials associated with Chou En-lai. Chou has not been publicly criticized in the current spate of posters and clearly continues as the regime's spokesman, but he may have felt threatened. A number of posters defending him are up in Peking.

Last weekend wall posters claimed that the central committee was meeting in what was described as an atmosphere of "struggle" over who is to hold positions of power. There is new evidence suggesting

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that some kind of meeting is taking place, but no further details concerning the issues in dispute have appeared. On 18 March, Czech correspondents in Peking saw handbills announcing the central committee meeting. At least one important provincial leader who is an alternate member of the committee is known to be in the city.

The last full meeting of the central committee was held in August 1966. In October 1966, another period of confusion over what direction the Cultural Revolution should take, the central committee convened an unpublicized "work conference." The present meeting is probably similar in character.

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USSR - Eastern Europe: Brezhnev is completing the round of talks he has been having with East European leaders during the past two months.

East German party boss Ulbricht is now in Moscow, presumably to discuss the Polish - East German campaign for solidarity vis-a-vis Bonn.

All Brezhnev's discussions have dealt with West Germany's initiatives for improved relations with Eastern Europe. Other topics reviewed probably have included the European Communist Party conference on European security and a proposal for early renewal of certain bilateral mutual assistance treaties that terminate next year.

Although the Polish, Czech, and Bulgarian leaders were evidently in varying degrees sympathetic to Soviet views, the Rumanians and Yugoslavs were largely unmoved. In the case of Hungary, the communiqué issued after Kadar's visit contained no reference to West Germany, indicating Kadar's desire to be free to continue negotiations with Bonn.

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Britain - South Arabia: Britain has suggested to the South Arabian Federal Government (SAFG) that independence be moved up from 1968 to 1 November 1967, according to a Federal official.

London offered "in return" to keep some military forces in the country for at least three months after November 1967. This may not in fact be a concession on London's part, since British officials think it will in any case take almost that long to complete the evacuation of British forces after independence. The SAFG wants the British military to remain for a longer period and to continue to guarantee the country's defense.

London is still trying to put together a government strong enough to survive after independence. It hopes that the United Nations mission due to arrive in South Arabia on 1 April will find a way to reconcile Adeni nationalist groups to the Federal Government. One key Adeni nationalist has tentatively agreed to discussions with British officials.

On the other hand, London's attempt to advance the date of independence suggests that it is pessimistic about finding a negotiated solution, and is eager to cut its losses, leaving the Arabs to sort out their own problems.

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*Sierra Leone: Army chief Lansana's extraconstitutional intervention yesterday was apparently in support of a bid by Albert Margai to continue as prime minister in the face of a stronger showing by his opponents in last week's election.

After learning of the governor general's designation of Siaka Stevens, leader of the opposition All People's Congress (APC), as formateur of a new government, Lansana moved quickly to force a suspension of the normal constitutional process. Deploying troops to strategic points in and around Freetown, the capital, he declared martial law and placed both the governor general and Stevens under house arrest.

Lansana's action came in the wake of a general election on 17 March in which the APC won 32 of 66 ordinary parliamentary seats while Margai's long-ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) apparently elected only 28 of its official candidates. Margai is also claiming four of the six seats won by independent candidates, on the basis of their reported postelection declarations for the SLPP. However, the successful SLPP candidates include six whose declared election--"unopposed"--at the time of nominations in February has been formally challenged by the APC and some SLPP dissidents who would like to dump Margai as party leader.

Although Lansana has personal reasons for opposing an APC government, Margai probably instigated the power play to gain time for bargaining and for returns to come in from yesterday's indirect election of 12 paramount chiefs as additional full members of parliament. Margai now is counting heavily on the support of most of these chiefs, who by custom have heretofore been formally apolitical although in fact they have long been closely allied with the SLPP. As of last night, six of seven elected chiefs reportedly had made unprecedented declarations of allegiance to the SLPP.

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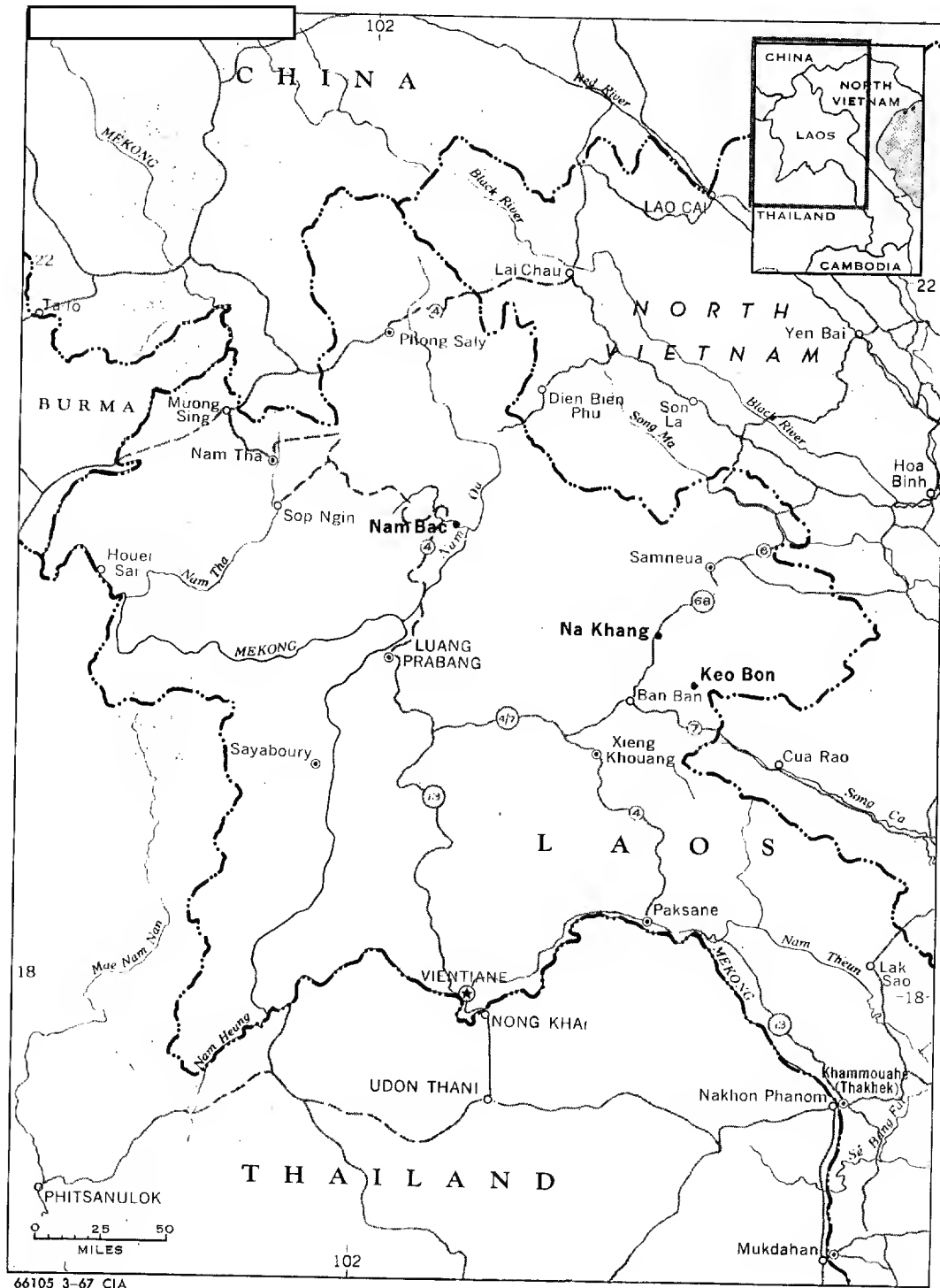
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APC supporters have charged Margai with trying to steal the election. Yesterday they staged several increasingly angry demonstrations in Freetown, one of their strongholds. More disturbances are likely today, especially if an announcement by the governor general, promised by Lansana for today, calls on Margai to form a new government.

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Laos: Government forces attempting to expand their area of control in northern Laos are encountering determined Communist resistance. Fire fights involving up to three Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese companies have erupted in recent days near Nam Bac--and at scattered friendly outposts behind Communist lines, such as Keo Bon and Na Khang. There is no evidence that the Communists are planning any significant expansion of fighting during the current dry season.

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French Somaliland: Demonstrations in Djibouti appear to be quieting down in the face of tough French security measures. Somali bitterness, however, is not likely to diminish quickly, and the French will have a hard time getting the Somali community to cooperate with any new local government. The Somali Republic charges the referendum was rigged and has announced that it does not "recognize" the referendum, but Mogadiscio appears to be moving cautiously while it decides what to do next.

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Egypt-US: The US Embassy in Cairo has received confirmation of Egypt's decision to withdraw its request for wheat from the US. An official of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry told embassy officials that "our request (for wheat) is no longer in effect. Forget about it. It is finished." In a newspaper interview on 20 March Nasir repeated his threat not to repay debts to countries--such as the US--that neither renegotiate Egyptian payments on old loans nor make new ones.

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Dominican Republic: The attempted assassination of right-wing political leader Antonio Imbert will stir up the country's political waters. The identity of the gunman who wounded Imbert--one of Trujillo's assassins--is not known. Although elements such as the Trujillo family may have been responsible, suspicions will focus on the government, which in the past has been charged with using strong-arm tactics to silence its opponents. *President Balaguer is "seriously concerned," and his close advisers say he is personally directing the investigation of the attack.

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